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IIC

The Fourth Great Movement of Indian Renaissance

Dr. C.D. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture

by

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The Fourth Great Movement of Indian Renaissance*

I

This paper deals mainly with education or, more precisely, higher education in India. The choice of the subject has been determined by a number of considerations. Education is the point at which the career and interest of Dr. C. D. Deshmukh intersect and overlap with those of mine. Secondly, we have good reason to believe that the Trustees of the India International Centre remember this aspect of Dr. Deshmukh's illustrious career with due importance and seriousness. Soon after the sad demise of Dr. Deshmukh, they organised as a part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the IIC a seminar on the theme, 'Higher Education in the 80s: Objectives and Opportunities'. Today, after about 30 years, the need for many more discussions on higher education in India is being felt with increasing urgency. This may not be very unusual, as I will show later. I would like to cite one evidence which demonstrates that the state of education in India today is a matter of great concern. On 28 December 2013, the University Grants Commission (UGC) celebrated its 60th anniversary which was presided over by the then Prime Minister of India who, incidentally, was also the Chairman of the UGC for some time. On the same day another former Chairman of the UGC said (under condition of anonymity), 'the Commission should introspect rather than celebrate .... After the initial few years, the UGC, instead of a body created to think about pedagogy, expansion and inclusion of more and more children within the ambit of higher education, reduced itself to a grant giving body.' He further said that there exists a 'civilisational difference between central universities and state universities'. Most importantly, he said, 'Pick up the Radhakrishnan Commission Report of 1950 and read it in 2013. You will be filled with a sense of déjà vu. All that the scholar-politician wrote continues to be *the problem of* higher education.' In any case there are enough issues to discuss so far as the state of higher education in India is concerned. These are some of the reasons that determined the choice of the subject of my paper. However, the shape and the content of the thought I want to share with you today have been determined by a strange happening: an incident of loss of memory which Rabindranath Tagore seemed to have suffered in 1936. We will come back to it soon.

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Education is a matter of universal concern. We may not be able to say anything about it which is not already well known. Still, there is an enigmatic aspect of the phenomenon of education or our attitude to it with which I would like to begin. There has never been a time when a society was not critical of its current system of education. What is equally true is that there was never a time in the history of any society when some celebrated teachers or scholars were not born. Part of what follows is that at any point of time and in any society when people criticise the current system of education and are planning or acting to remove the deficiencies noted, they are preceded by others who did nearly the same or similar things. Thinkers and activists—the policy makers and administrators—in the field of education have always before them the experiences and failures (also perhaps achievements) of their predecessors on which they can build a better system of education. But from experience we know that the concerned people in India seem to begin from scratch each time. By not building on the past, progress is delayed and goals remain unchanged. We need to note the second thing that follows from the peculiar feature of education referred to.

A deficient education system does not mean that there is no progress in education. If, however, education is always marked by both deficiency and progress, then what follows is that progress means only partial progress and not all-round progress. To put it differently, from time to time, the content, if not also the form, of the deficiencies of education, which continue along with or in spite of progress, changes. We do not always give these facts the serious attention they deserve. As a consequence, our talk about education becomes vague generalities whereas the need is to delve deep into the specifics of the matter. We need to know all about the varying and continuing deficiencies and build on the past failures and successes of our predecessors in setting things right. We also need to know what our contemporaries are doing in the field of education in different parts of the country. Both vertical and horizontal consolidation of ideas and efforts are deemed desirable if we are to avoid duplication and ensure speedy progress in establishing the right kind of education in our country. However, while taking stock of the earlier and contemporary works in the field we need to remain alert for new deficiencies that may emerge while we try to rectify the old or even the current ones. Sometimes what appears as a continuing deficiency is so only in its outward form while at the deeper level it is a new problem and it needs a new strategy to tackle it. For example, the problem of incorporating in the right proportion instruction in science and humanities was noticed and addressed by some Indians in the 19th century; nonetheless it is, as we will show, one of the major problems of education today. However, careful study will reveal that in spite of the similarity of the outward form, the problem of the late 20th or early 21st first century is distinctly different from the corresponding problem of the previous time period.

Keeping this in mind we will begin our discussion with the history of education in India. However, the issues relating to education are not just historical but also, and more importantly, conceptual. Our own treatment today will be from both these perspectives. The brief excursion into the history with which we begin will bring out two major deficiencies of the current education system in India which are old but serious. At the end we will discuss a few more shortcomings of the current education in India which are of recent origin.

II

Education is a vast subject and it has many features. It was not easy to decide which among them would be best to discuss here. What helped me decide was the recollection of a strange incident which occurred a long time ago. It concerns the loss of memory which Rabindranath apparently suffered in 1936 when he wrote the paper, 'The Religion of an Artist'. The paper was his contribution to the anthology which Dr. Radhakrishnan planned and edited jointly with him. I would like to share what he did not say or forgot to say there. Rabindranath was not the only person who forgot to mention the Fourth Movement of Indian Renaissance, namely, the National Education Movement (NEM). On another occasion, Anne Besant was alleged to have forgotten this movement or ignored to build on the achievements of the leaders of this movement. Aurobindo, in one of his published letters, nearly took Ms Besant to task for this. The third group of persons to forget NEM includes, among others, virtually all the national leaders of Independent India. It is alleged that if they had not forgotten, they could have built on the successes and failures that the movement met during its short but remarkable career. The state of education in India today would have been much better.

This was something which Rabindranath was least expected to forget. There seem to be three easy ways to explain the loss of memory in question. Perhaps what is being alleged to have been forgotten by Rabindranath did not happen at all, or it was not important, or even if it was important, he just failed to recall it at the time of writing the article in question. Accidental lapse of memory is nothing unusual. There is a great difference between Rabindranath's failure to remember the earlier education reform movement or movements and the forgetfulness of the leaders of free India in this regard. To return to Rabindranath's failure to remember NEM, we cannot account for it in any of the three ways suggested above. So we are led to believe that Rabindranath's silence was a case of feigned amnesia. This created another problem; how to explain why he had to feign loss of memory. The natural explanation is that he wanted to hide certain things or avoid referring to them. In fact we have enough reason to think that he wanted to avoid publicising his differences with a great man whom he openly and justly adored and to whom he was tied by a special emotional bond. Rabindranath remained a confirmed member of the Brahmadharma, the faith which Rammohan Roy founded. And yet, in the context of the education movement or movements of India during colonial rule, Rabindranath sharply differed from Rammohan. Any mention of the fourth movement of the Indian renaissance or NEM would remind him of his differences with his hero and would also oblige him to make that public himself. He preferred to take refuge in feigned amnesia. If this is correct, as it seems to be, then a number of things follow. First, Rabindranath held Rammohan in high esteem and this is widely known to be both justified and a fact. Second, he did not actually forget what he did not say. In fact he remembered that he found, at the time of NEM, that Rammohan's views and proposals about education were unacceptable. These views of Rammohan, which were shared in his time by many leading persons, were part of the first education reform movement in colonial India. Later, Rabindranath, among others, spearheaded a second movement of education in colonial India, also called the National Education Movement, but different from and opposed to the first one. I argue that in consciously differing from Rammohan, a fact he was unhappy to recall, Rabindranath developed his own thoughts and views on education. It is a different matter that he utilised Rammohan's thoughts only negatively. His colleagues in general followed this practice of withholding explicit negative reference to Rammohan and his views. In their plans and proposals, in their statements and debates, rarely do the leaders of NEM make any reference to Rammohan. But they were not ignorant of the first education movement. They did made appropriate use of the movement Rammohan was associated with. They allowed themselves to learn from the success and failures of the leaders of the first education movement of whom Rammohan was perhaps the most prominent. In Independent India, however, we seem to have forgotten this practice of remembering and building on the works and thoughts of our immediate predecessors—the leaders of NEM—as well as those who preceded them. In our case amnesia has not helped us much, partly because it is not feigned but genuine amnesia.

Are we not, it may be asked, reading too much into a chance happening—Rabindranath's failure to mention the education reform movement in his article of 1936? Let us turn to the article in question for the last time. In it Rabindranath writes in the beginning that he was born in Bengal in an epoch 'when the currents of *three* movements had met in the life of our *country'*. At least two of these three movements and the fourth one which Rabindranath apparently forgot to mention were all-India movements (with their centre and place of origin in Bengal or Calcutta, the then capital of British India). These movements contributed to the shaping of modern India, the India which we largely inhabit today. These are also viewed as the major constituents of Indian renaissance. I will not enter here into the controversy (though I have great sympathy with those who adopt a negative stand in the matter) if there ever occurred any such thing as renaissance or whether it is right to describe as renaissance certain developments that took place in India in the 19th and early 20th century. But there indeed occurred in addition to the three movements Rabindranath's actual mention of the other great movement which is generally known as the education reform movement in colonial India. The second and the last phase of this movement is known as the National Education Movement. Apart from its own inherent importance, NEM contributed much to the manifestation and rapid growth of the national freedom movement in both its versions—the militant and pacifist. In the early 20th century, these two movements became so close to each other that it was difficult to tell the one from the other. Many great leaders of the education movement in its later phase were also the leaders of the national freedom movement. Because of it merging with the national freedom movement and due to the great prominence that the freedom movement enjoyed, at least since 1905, NEM was no longer at the forefront of national life after about 1906, although it was not altogether over. In 1936, NEM was more alive than, at least, the religious reform movement which was no longer a force to reckon with after the emergence of liberal Hinduism.

So what Rabindranath left unsaid in that article did happen and was also something very important. His lifelong thoughts, writings and activities amply show that he gave great importance to matters relating to education. It only remains to be shown that Rabindranath was very closely and actively involved in NEM from its early beginnings. The greatest outcome of NEM was the establishment of the National Council of Education (NCE) in Bengal with men like Aurobindo Ghosh and Satish Chandra Mukherjee at the helm and Lala Lajpat

Rai and Balagangdhar among its active supporters. Rabindranath delivered an impassioned inaugural speech after which the NCE formally started to function. The second evidence of Rabindranath's close and active association with NEM is even more convincing. The NCE soon established a number of national schools which successfully conducted appropriate examinations. Rabindranath was one of the paper setters and examiners in those examinations.

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A brief account of two education reform movements or two phases of the education reform movement in colonial India may be in order. We will do that historical exercise a little later but with a view to introducing some socio-political and conceptual issues. One reason for introducing these issues is to bring to our explicit awareness the implications of our failure to remember NEM (and the education movement which preceded it) and their impact on national development.

The emergence of the National Education Movement marked the end of the first phase of the (Western) education reform movement in colonial India (which we will call WEM) which started around 1811. The national education movement took shape towards the last decade of the 19th century; it started by opposing or rejecting the relevant goals or means of education envisaged during WEM. Rammohan Roy is remembered as the most celebrated among the Indian leaders and initiators of WEM. The question to ask is, what were the criticisms of the leaders of NEM against the reforms that were suggested and at least partly brought about by WEM? It is clear from the description of it as 'WEM' that the first phase of the education reform movement in colonial India was a movement for the introduction of Western education. If the name of the movement in its second phase—the national education movement—is any indication, then the objection against the leaders of WEM was that they failed to achieve the revival (or introduction anew) of *national* education; they failed to devise and introduce in India (with or without the help of the government) a scheme of national education. However, it would be wrong to bring this charge against the leaders of WEM. The fact is that the Indians who are viewed as leaders of WEM did not even initiate any education movement as such. Only when the rulers allotted some funds for education to benefit the subjected race in India did these leaders come forward with a proposal that the money be spent to introduce Western education. It would have been unfair for the leaders of NEM to have suggested that their predecessors were guilty of failing to introduce NE in India. It was not in their scheme of things at all. They only wanted the money allotted by the government to be spent in a certain way and it was done. If it later turned out that the Western education actually introduced was not exactly the kind they wanted, then that was a different matter. In any case they did not, nor did they want to, introduce NE as understood by the leaders of NEM and they had their own reasons.

All these and many other things related to WEM and NEM may not have been unknown to the leaders of free India but they may not be in their explicit memory either. Perhaps for this reason they never cared to revisit the history of the education movements in colonial India or build the education system of independent India on the basis of the outcome of the earlier reform efforts. As a result, they failed to do justice to our predecessors and perhaps missed the chance of implementing a far better education system—and implementing it faster—in independent India than what has been possible so far. It is alleged that we are still a nation without a national education.

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The Western education movement which started in 1811 was over, in one sense, in 1870. The year 1947 is often held to be the end point of the second phase of the education reform movement in colonial India. A professional historian may not assign exactly these dates, but for our purpose they suffice; besides, we have checked that these dates have not been assigned arbitrarily. We ourselves do not accept the reason for assigning 1947 as the end point of NEM. We will discuss here what the reason is and why we cannot accept it. Before proceeding any further, it should be said, by way of making one's position clear and to avoid misunderstanding, that it is not one's purpose to deny that India has achieved significant advances in different areas of life, including education, during the last 60 years or so. From time to time, many deficiencies in education were detected and many directions for further improvement have been suggested, especially by different Education Commissions appointed by the centre and the states. However, it must also be admitted that the leaders of free India have failed to deal with some avoidable but serious defects in the current education system of India, besides failing to implement the programme of national education.

I propose to discuss first the subject of non-implementation of the project of NE. The question is, did NEM come to a successful end, as some appear to maintain, in 1947, or immediately thereafter, or was it and still is, waiting to be completed by the leaders of free India who ignored it? This is a matter of serious concern for all of us. For a correct answer to the question we need to be clear about the idea of national education. (For the present we are not considering the other question: what is to be understood by education?) We said earlier that by 1905 or shortly thereafter, NEM came to be almost merged with the national freedom movement (NFM). Many who were aware of NEM perhaps thought that it was a part of the agenda of NFM. For such people it was quite natural to think that in 1947, NEM came to a successful end when India attained political freedom. It appears that they thought that NEM meant education under national control. Accordingly they believed that what NEM was aiming at was only a part of the goal of NFM. While NEM sought national control only over education, NFM sought to bring the entire nation—and every aspect of it: the social, political, educational—under national control. India automatically achieved national education—achieved the fulfillment of the objective of NEM—the moment it became an independent nation. If this is true, then the leaders of free India cannot be accused of forgetting or ignoring the leaders of NEM and their views and efforts.

The fact, however, is that NEM was not just a national movement of education to bring education under national control. National control on education was indeed a part of the objective of NEM, but only a part. In so far as the idea of national education had other meanings, we cannot or should not think that

NEM was automatically over in 1947. We need to know what exactly, according to the leaders of NEM, the meaning of national education was or what is the actual content of the idea of national education. The fact that in free India we rarely discuss or revisit NEM (or what preceded it, namely WEM) shows that instead of being witness to the successful completion of NEM (which did not happen), we allowed ourselves to forget even to ask what the leaders of NEM meant by national education. The leaders of free India could have avoided this charge and the charge of ignoring or forgetting NEM if they seriously asked or considered whether we, in independent India, have achieved or were trying to achieve the goal set by the leaders of NEM. This they failed to do in spite of their adoration for the leaders of the national education movement who were also as a rule the leaders of the national freedom movement. It should have been clear to them that in post-independence India, we largely ignored the goals and means the leaders of NEM suggested for education which, in their opinion, India badly needed. If we knew what was meant by national education we would realise that those suggestions are yet to materialise and were not automatically fulfilled when India attained political freedom. Even otherwise, education in India has made uninterrupted progress since independence. We witnessed many twists and turns in our education policy and educational administration. Why not spend a little time to look back into what the leaders of NEM suggested or what goals they set for education in India.

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A part of the reason why we start with the history of the education movement in colonial India is that it enables us to identify at least two current deficiencies and suggest that these could have been overcome if we had paid due attention to the education movements of colonial India. The leaders of NEM were acutely aware of some serious deficiencies of the then current education (WE) system and endeavoured to avoid or overcome them. Free India or her leaders do not seem to be explicitly aware of these. On the contrary, they do not seem to be serious about some other defects in the current education system which are of more recent origin. It is not my intention to present the leaders of free India in poor light. We know the adage that it is easier to criticise than to appreciate and conduct ourselves accordingly. Space does not permit a discussion of India's many well known achievements in the field of education. Besides, the criticism is meant to be taken as an invitation to address some current problems and take necessary steps to improve the present state of education. The shortcomings to be discussed here are not unknown but they needs must be brought to our explicit notice. To put it differently, many successes and failures in the field of education are well known and are frequently talked about. But the deficiencies we want to discuss here do not seem to fall in that category although they are very serious. Besides, some of these deficiencies in education led the makers of modern and free India to launch education reform movements during colonial rule and thus constitute, whether we know it or not, a strong link between our present and the immediate past.

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We now turn to a brief account of two education movements or two phases of the education movement in colonial India. Even a brief exposition of education in India needs to be structured into four stages: (i) the pre-colonial period (ii) the colonial period—the first phase (iii) the colonial period—the second phase, and (iv) the post-colonial and post-independence period. During the 19th century, colonial India witnessed two successive education movements: the movement for Western education (MWE, also WEM), followed by NEM. There are many who maintain, though it is simplistic if not totally false, that the leaders of NEM launched their movement to oppose WEM which was imposed on us a little earlier by the rulers. Some others go a step further and believe that the colonial rulers decided to introduce Western education for the benefit of the native people as there was no education worth its name, nor a regular system of education in India. During Company rule, the government's initiative in the area of education of its subjects was set in motion in 1811 when Lord Minto wrote his famous Minutes. This document is evidence that the foreigners did not believe that education was altogether absent in India at that time. For what Minto noticed and recorded was that there was a decline of education in India and not the absence of it. The British Government originally wanted to improve and promote indigenous education and the education system. However, the government was ultimately persuaded to introduce WE. Those who influenced the Government in this matter were not all British. Some leading Indians also exercised their influence. Even when persuaded to introduce WE in India, the British Government did not do so in a hurry. It took about 20 years to make any significant progress in this direction. During these years there were protracted debates between the members of the anglicist and nationalist camps about the shape Indian education should take. In this debate, many British people were in the nationalist camp and there were Indians in the anglicist camp. It should also be noted that ultimately the views of no single group were fully rejected or accepted, though the views and recommendations of the anglicist camp generally took precedence over those of the other camp. But it will be wrong to claim that India owes Western education to the British in general or Macaulay in particular. For, like the British Macaulay, the Indian Rammohan was among the radical members of the anglicist camp which fought for the introduction of Western education. Incidentally, when people criticise Rammohan's radical stand in the matter of introducing Western education in India, they should remember that one cannot hold him directly responsible. For, there is no way of knowing how much, if any, influence his 1823 letter to Lord Amherst exerted. For this letter remained unanswered for 10 years till his death. Rammohan or no Rammohan, Macaulay or no Macaulay, there was great demand for Western education among many in Hindu society, including men of different castes and persuasions. Independent of British help and effort, and even independent of the initiative of Rammohan, some 50 leading Hindus succeeded in establishing the Hindu Vidyalaya (later Hindu College) for Western education for their children. It is a different matter that this college later came under Government patronage when education became more costly, but it had a successful run of about 10 years on its own resources. The demand for Western education has not diminished since. What then was the issue before the leaders of NEM?

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Before we come to other and more specific issues, we must discuss one general problem. Even those who were not at all related to NEM became increasingly aware that the newly introduced WE was quite defective. The resolution drafted by MacDonnell in 1889, during the time of Lord Lansdowne, was 'drawing attention to some of the most glaring defects of our education system from the point of view of intellectual training and discipline, and containing valuable recommendations for remedying them.' That these recommendations did not translate into action is a different matter. Many Indians as well as foreigners found, within merely 50 years of its existence, that the new system of education was deficient in many respects. Some but not all these defects directly contributed to the formation of the idea of national education or to the launching of NEM. We will note here a few of the defects

The first Indian Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, Sir Gooroo Das Banerjee, made reference in his convocation addresses from 1890 to 1892 to some serious defects in the current education system. He not only felt the need for instruction in the mother tongue, but also for university fellowships for the promotion of original research. Many at the time pointed out that the recipients of this education were not assured of a minimum earning capacity for subsistence, let alone a decent livelihood. Failures such as these can be a valid criticism against any education system up to a point, but national education can hardly be defined in terms of the corresponding successes alone. Besides, on the question of the medium of instruction, it would be fair to say that teaching in the mother tongue at the level of higher education and research was problematic. However, some aspects of the idea of national education came out more clearly in relation to the deficiencies of WE noted by personalities like Herbert Spencer, Valentine Chirol (the correspondent of *London Times* in India at the time), Rabindranath Tagore, Anne Besant, Sir George Birdwood and Sister Nivedita to name a few. It was seen that the Western education prevalent in India since 1835 or a little earlier had two other closely related defects. First, the education of the time was artificial and there was total neglect of the provision for Eastern education. This aspect of Western education was forcefully brought out by Rabindranath Tagore and others in their many writings.

In the opinion of Herbert Spencer, the failure of a student commencing his higher education to satisfy his examiner with his knowledge of 'the technical terms, cant phrases, slang and even extinct slang spoken by people of another nation' should prove the 'unfitness of those concerned in educating them', rather than of the aspiring students. Anne Besant highlighted another aspect of the artificiality of Western education. She held that it would be unrealistic not to educate Indian students in Western education, without which they would not 'gain a livelihood'. She however held that the books and emphasis should be changed. The native students should learn much more of the history of their own people and the geography of their own land before learning, or learning exclusively, about people of other countries. '… every man should know in fuller detail the history of his own nation as such knowledge not only conduces to patriotism but also enables a sound judgment to be formed as to the suitability of the proposed changes to the national genius.' Valentine Chirol emphasised a point which Rabindranath also did. 'The fundamental weakness of our Indian educational system is that the average Indian student cannot bring his education into any direct relation with the world in which, outside the class or lecture room, he continues to live. For that world … of his forefathers … is as far removed as the poles asunder from the Western world which claims his education.' George Birdwood noticed yet another, related abnormality of the prevalent system of education. 'In our English system of education far too much of time and energy is spent on English literature and far too little on Hindu, i.e., Sanskrit and the literature of the literary Prakrits, such as Maratthi and Tamil.' Krishna Chandra Bhattacharya in one of his addresses to his students about six years before Rabindranath wrote in his paper that the current education was contributing to students' losing svaraj in ideas, preparing them for docile acceptance of whatever they were taught about foreign thoughts, life and manners, rather than enabling them to assimilate what was best in the Western culture. It was, he said, alienating the university educated men of India, the new caste of men, from the greater section of the Indian population.

In sum, the newly introduced WE was found to be defective in every aspect. The editor of *Dawn* said as much. He observed, while reiterating some of the points already made by G. Banerjee, that the prevalent education system had failed to satisfy every concerned party. It was academically, politically and even commercially a failure. However, for understanding the idea of national education we need not make reference to all of them. Similarly, some features of the prevailing education of the time, such as its being Western, was not the target of criticism by the leaders of NEM.

The Western education being opposed by the leaders of NEM had among its leaders great personalities like Rammohan who were highly perceptive. How could these leaders of WE want to introduce such a defective system of education? In their defence, it has been said that the great personalities of the early 19th century preferred to overlook these defects and supported the introduction of Western education because they were primarily concerned with the regeneration of India—India at a time when it was riddled with innumerable social evils and all-round economic backwardness. At that time, many men who were otherwise of nationalist temperament supported the continuation of British rule as they hoped that India would progress under it. However, by the 1880s or 1890s, the leaders of NEM became convinced that the current system of education could not help the development of the country.

So far the system of Western education was being opposed by the leaders of NEM not because it was Western (as the charge of national chauvinism against them seems to imply), but because it was found deficient in its almost total neglect of everything that was Indian—Indian languages, history, geography, literature, philosophy, aesthetics and grammar on the one hand, and Indian life on the other. These were different charges, different from the charge that education in India at the time was not under national control. Both Indians and British were responsible for the shape of education then. Similarly, these deficiencies were noted and expressed by the right thinking men of the time of both national and foreign origin.

The leaders of NEM found that the most crucial defect in WE was that it was unlikely to deliver the goods for which some Indian leaders wanted it to be introduced. It was unlikely to ensure the development of India because no system of education was expected to help national development if it did not enable the recipients to have a sound knowledge of their country or develop a sense of patriotism. Secondly, Western education was found to be over literary; as such it was of no use to industrialisation or to creating a work force for the purpose. These and some other related considerations also led to the formation of the idea of national education and the launching of NEM. The most comprehensive statement of the nature and goal of national education is found in the writings of the editor of *Dawn*, Satish Chandra Mukherjee, who was not only one of the greatest nationalists of the time but also a great educationist and spiritual personality. His statement incorporated the points and sentiments expressed by people like Rabindranath, Aurobindo, Birdwood and so on. His views in the matter are also most authentic and representative of the views of all sections of the supporters of national education and the national education movement.

There was one more aspect of WEM. Some of the leaders of this movement like Rammohan and Macaulay not only wanted the introduction of Western education, but also simultaneously pleaded for the abolition of the study of Indian subjects. This is one point that did not go well with the nationalists. Even before NEM was officially launched and towards the later part of the first phase of the education reform movement in colonial India, many foreign personalities like James Prinsep, George Birdwood and Valentine Chirol opposed the discontinuation of the study of indigenous subjects and were in favour of the study of Indian languages.

Against this background it would be wrong to hold that the leaders of NEM were radical or revivalist. They wanted national education but they did not want to abandon Western education. What they actually wanted will become clear, but we can say that they were in favour of inclusive education. They found that the newly introduced Western education was deficient on this count as well. We will see that higher education in India today is also non-inclusive but for a different reason. The need for inclusive education is as necessary today as it was in the early 20th century, as was realised by the leaders of NEM.

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The second phase of the education reform movement in colonial India got its greatest boost from the Swadeshi or boycott movement of 1905. Precisely at this point, as mentioned earlier, the two movements—the education reform movement (second phase) and the political freedom movement—became entwined to a certain extent and quite naturally. By this time, the earlier religious nationalism had matured into, and was not just replaced by, the political nationalism of the time. From the 1890s, some great thinkers were agitating not so much against Western education as such, but for greater or exclusive national control on education. Against this background, what fuelled great unrest among the students and general public was the publication of the report of the Indian Universities' Commission which was constituted in 1902. The report was published with the note of dissent of Gooroo Dass Banerjee who was the only Indian member of the Commission. The Government disregarded the unrest and passed the Indian Universities Act in 1904 on the basis of the report of the majority of the members of the Commission of 1902. As the Act ignored certain demands of its leaders and supporters, the agitation became fiercer. Lord Curzon's indifference caused many to put up an unqualified opposition against him. (In the process the good features of the Act did not get their due from the agitators.) The Indian Universities Act was viewed as a deliberate attempt to throttle higher education in India and was seen to be designed to check non-governmental control of education and complete officialisation of the whole educational machinery. The native influences on (their own) education were severely restricted. Apart from the demand to bring education under national control, the other demand that was made in the 1890s and became a part of the idea of national education was the demand for the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. But there was, as we will see, still more in the idea of national education.

When we study the state of education in free India today, we use certain parameters to judge its success in this field. One might expect that one of the parameters would be the extent to which we have been able to fulfil the dreams and hopes of the leaders of the national education movement of the early 20th century. This expectation seems to be quite legitimate. Sadly, however, this expectation has not been fulfilled till now. Leaders of independent India and the members of the successive education commissions appointed by the central and state governments did not truly revisit NEM nor initiate the necessary review or debate. As a result, the idea of national education was never fully clarified and implemented.

One should not think that the important objective of NEM—bringing education under national control—was automatically achieved in 1947 and the rest was a revivalist, chauvinistic tendency which we should forget or ignore or else the education of the country would be pushed back to the pre-colonial days when there was either no education worth the name or only some archaic form of learning from which Rammohan and others wanted to save the country and its people. It is not impossible that many who boast of being progressive thought like this. But if they did, it would not so much show them as progressive but as totally ignorant of both NEM and the leaders of the movement—their impeccable character and high credibility, their revolutionary nature and perceptiveness. It should be remembered that the leaders of NFM were directly or indirectly associated with NEM, and NFM was certainly not a revivalist movement. Further, it is not only false but also slanderous to say that there was no education worth the name in pre-colonial India. We will discuss later that the education prevalent during the pre-colonial period had certain characteristics which reflected peculiarly Indian thinking and aspirations which perhaps made it difficult for people of other cultures to recognise the Indian education system of the time. The leaders of NEM did not subscribe to the view that pre-colonial India had no system of education, or that the system of education prevalent at that time was not worth the name. However, they were not revivalists. Their reason for opposing the new system of Western education was different. They opposed it not just because it was Western, but because it had many deficiencies that made it unlikely to help the development of India. Two major deficiencies were (i) exclusion or marginalisation of Indian subjects and (ii) the literary character of it. It was mainly because of these two defects that it was felt necessary to launch NEM. Even then some may say that people of free India cannot be accused of forgetting NEM or its leaders. For, besides being free from foreign control, education in free India is also free from the two defects just noted. Knowingly or unknowingly, all the points of NEM have been taken care of. If the leaders of free India are said to still be notionally oblivious of the earlier education movement or movements, it is hardly of any consequence. There is some point in this rejoinder. We will soon see why it is still not correct to say that all or the most important objectives of NEM have been taken care of in independent India and why it is still useful to revisit this movement. Some objectives of NEM remain unfulfilled even after education was brought under national control and instruction through the vernacular is, if not as a matter of rule or law, in place. The idea of national education of the leaders of NEM is yet to be made fully clear or understood. No effort seems to have been made by us in this direction in independent India.

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Independent India's education scenario began with two inheritances. The first inheritance was Western education, the introduction of which marked a sort of successful culmination of the first phase of the education (reform) movement in colonial India, the MWE, spanning the period 1811 to 1870. The defects of the newly introduced WE began to be exposed by 1889. Despite this, and even though it was followed by another education movement, NEM, the effects of WEM are still being felt. In spite of the defects that were noticed about 70 years before India attained freedom, and notwithstanding the objections levelled against it by the leaders of NEM, Western education is very much prevalent. We mentioned before that since the days when some leading Indians jointly established Hindu College, the demand for Western education never diminished and continued even in free India. The second inheritance was that of an unfinished movement namely, NEM; its objective was to replace the newly introduced WE by NE or even better, transform the newly introduced WE into national education as it was conceived by its leaders. The leaders of NEM not only critiqued the then WE, but also made positive and concrete suggestions about the form, content and philosophy of NE.

Of these two inheritances, the leaders of free India did less or no injustice to the first inheritance. The way they conducted themselves made it seem as if there was no alternative to Western education. The course of events during the last two centuries shows that they were largely right. Rabindranath's experiment at Santiniketan ended with the establishment of Visva Bharati which, in time, transformed into little more than a mainstream, Western style university. Anne Besant's Central Hindu College and Madan Mohan Malaviya's Benaras Hindu University are also largely Western style academic institutions. Jadavpur University, which sprang directly from the National Council of Education, Bengal, is no exception in this respect and caters mainly to Western education. Even Hindu College, which began as a truly national educational institute, came under government patronage within a few years. It is possible that the leaders of independent India thought that all they could and should do was improve WE in response to needs as and when they arose. And they have been doing this since independence or at least since 1950.

However, so far as the other inheritance is concerned, independent India should have at least reopened the issue of national education and held a public debate on it. The leaders concerned appeared to have forgotten to do this. All that might be considered to be national in our higher education today is the ritual of reading certain passages from the Upanisads as part of the formality in the Convocation Oath which the recipients of degrees from universities, and some other institutions, are supposed to take. The only relevance of this seems to be that the passages that are read out are from the section of *Taittiriya Upanisad* which is known as *Siksavalli* or *Siksadhyaya*. This is observed as mere ritual; it means little in practice. How can we explain, let alone justify, the total blackout of a movement which occurred in the recent past of our country and which was initiated and nurtured by the best intellectuals and best minds that we hold in highest esteem. We can understand Rabindranath's feigned amnesia, but not the actual amnesia of the leaders and lay people of independent India. How could they afford not to revisit NEM and the issues discussed during that movement? It is true that India was fully occupied with the issue of political freedom from 1905. But even after 1947, we did not do much about the unfinished National Education Movement. This movement was not successfully over by 1947, nor is it now of mere historical interest. Those who are discerning about the state of education in India so many years after independence will agree with us, i.e., we can still profit from discussing some of the issues which kept the leaders of NEM busy. Education is a matter of abiding concern and instead of reinventing the wheel, we in free India should have begun by recalling and reviewing the two earlier movements, particularly NEM. The demand for national education is and had been an assertion of the right to exercise freedom, though in a limited area of social life and culture. On the other hand, national freedom is not complete with political liberty alone; we have to introduce or restore truly national education.

We cannot dismiss whatever has gone before in the field of education as worthless. There is evidence to show that education in the highly developed ancient culture of India was given great importance. It has been observed and recorded by men like Sir Edward Hyde East that on the issue of education alone, Indians of different castes and persuasions could combine and act jointly. Even if the leaders of NEM took us back to pre-colonial India, they would not have led us to an educational desert. Those who say there was no education worth the name in pre-colonial India may have a fixed notion of what education is. They perhaps believed that only Western education deserved that importance. For those who see it this way, it is necessary to reopen the issues and concerns that occupied the minds of the great leaders of NEM from 1890 to 1906 and perhaps even later. They were deeply interested in the educational and social development of India. Their concern for national education was a modern concern and cannot be dismissed as old and archaic. In traditional India, education was closer to national education in some intelligible sense. There was then 'national' education without a nation (in the modern political sense of the term). In modern India of the 19th and 20th century (and to some extent even today) we have a nation without a national education in the true sense of the term. Even after a century, NEM seems necessary.

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The truth of this last assertion will depend on what sort of education the leaders of NEM thought necessary for India's development. Or, what would national education have that it could be said to succeed where the earlier Western education failed. To begin with, the answer is that the leaders of NEM found that WE of the time was over literary; a system of education which did not give space to science and technology was unlikely to facilitate national growth. Accordingly, these subjects were included in the curricula prepared for national schools established by the NCE. In this sense, independent India can easily be seen as providing its people with national education. Knowingly or unknowingly they have fulfilled the demands of the leaders of NEM and have been following them instead of forgetting them. It will be wrong and unjust if we say they forgot or ignored NEM. The objectives as well as means of national development as conceived by the leaders of NEM have been incorporated in the education policies and measures of free India. In the true sense of the term, free India is the legacy of NEM.

We believe that this rejoinder would not fully convince or satisfy the leaders of NEM. It will become clear if we examine the idea of national education a little more. The word meant more than just education under national control and education necessary for national development. To know more about this, we need to consult the resolution of the Ways and Means Committee of NEM which was passed on 10 December 1995. The foremost leader of the movement and one of the greatest intellectuals of all time was responsible for including in the resolution the statement that the National Council of Education was planning to impart an education 'not in opposition to but standing apart from, the existing systems of Primary, Secondary and University Education'.

There was at least one more important clause in the statement or description of national education. The demand was that national education should be *along national lines.* This aspect of national education seems to be an unrealised goal. Education in India today is not along national lines. The leaders of independent India are either unaware of this demand by the leaders of NEM or knowingly ignore this aspect of national education. However, one can ignore the demand for education along national lines—the education which suits India's native genius—provided the decision to ignore it is legitimised by necessary debate or discussion. Such discussion will answer the oft-made complaint that it is not clear what education along national lines could mean in addition to its being under national control and being dependent only on national resources. We can initiate such debate even today. To that end our effort here is to critically examine the idea of national education as education along national lines. The first requirement is that any account of NE in India has to be both conceptually sound and historically authentic. To fulfil the latter requirement we need to study the statements and deeds of the leaders of NEM; we need to revisit NEM.

The leaders of NEM acted very fast. Within a short time they not only planned but formally registered the first two institutions or organisations: the National Council of Education (NCE) and the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education (SPTE). These two organisations supplemented each other. They had many common members and Rashbehari Ghose was the President of both at the same time. The NCE soon established a number of schools in Calcutta, in districts, towns and villages, prepared detailed syllabi and held examinations. They also organised lectures and started debates through journal articles. In discussions and published articles they also tried to explain the idea of national education and national university. We have already noted that NE was not envisaged in opposition to WE but was to run parallel with it. For the present purpose of further clarification of the notion of national education as education along national lines, we should note that the leaders of NE insisted on two objectives which come under the general head of comprehensive (or inclusive) and balanced education. However, these points did not come out sharply in the explicit statements of the leaders of NEM.

Be that as it may, the general objective of comprehensive and balanced education had two components: (A) education should comprise and combine in right proportions both literary and scientific–technological courses (and training in them), and (B), it should comprise and combine in right proportions both Eastern and Western subjects or disciplines of knowledge. The rationale was that education which did not satisfy component (A) would not succeed in social regeneration and nation building, and a system of education which fell short of (B) would not enable an authentic view of our nation or keep us rooted in our own culture. Without this we cannot not develop the power and ability to assimilate what is best in another culture and thereby enrich and improve our own. If an education system fails to do that, then it cannot contribute to national growth and development by creating the right sort of mindset in people, setting up industries, and generating management personnel or a proper work force. The syllabi of NCE incorporated and reflected both these requirements. Western education during the period of NEM was deficient in both these respects. It could at best turn the students into copies, and imperfect copies at that, of men of British or European origin without roots in their own culture. The editor of *Dawn* wrote in 1898 that 'The Indian Universities are, if we may so express ourselves, copies of copies: For English Universities themselves being bad copies it is clear that the Universities here in India suffer from a double taint: (1) that of being bad imitations, and (2) that the original itself requires to be perfected before it will be able to assimilate the true functions of education.' If independent India had remembered these ideas and suggestions and sought to seriously implement them on a priority basis, things in India would have been much better than they are today. Our general criticism against the current education system in India is that it is not national education in the sense just stated. The leaders of free India failed to build on the past experience and works of their predecessors for whom they do not otherwise lack respect.

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We need to further dwell on the idea of comprehensive and balanced education and its two components. As mentioned, WE at the time was not comprehensive or balanced, and unlikely to achieve the regeneration and development of the country. Besides, it was almost exclusively Western. Rammohan did not want an over-literary education even if he wanted a system of education which would be almost exclusively Western in subjects taught. But in the 60-plus years after independence, our leaders have established a system of education which is over scientific and over technological.

This is an example of continuing deficiency which is outwardly the same but different in detail. Besides being over scientific, the current education in India has failed to ensure balance and comprehensiveness as Western branches of knowledge are given precedence over Indian knowledge systems. Inadequate attention and emphasis on Indian languages and literature continues. Humanities and Indian (or Eastern) knowledge do not get due importance. Today, this has become a matter of great concern for academicians of most disciplines like science, technology and humanities, as well as the educated public. This imbalance with a bias for science and technology is much greater than NEM's imbalance when it was over-literary. Unless we understand the history and cause, we cannot hope to effect a balanced education, i.e., bring science and humanities closer to each other. This is, according to the leaders of NEM, one of the goals which should be kept in mind if education is to be reformed in such a way that the development of the country is ensured.

National development and reform of education can be viewed as the common issue whether it is WE, NE or contemporary education (CE). According to the leaders of NEM, inclusive and balanced education alone can serve the purpose. The leaders of both WE and CE have failed to evolve or introduce such a system of inclusive and balanced education. This is the reason why even today it is relevant to revisit NEM. However, this may not be easily convincing. It may even be suspected that it is an attempt to reintroduce through the back door some outmoded and useless subjects. The widely popular view is that science and technology are indispensable tools of development. According to this view, CE and even WE are vindicated (in so far as the intention of the promoters of WE had been the introduction of science subjects in place of outmoded Indian subjects). What is the justification for revisiting NEM or its central tenet that humanities, besides science and technology, Indian systems of knowledge, *and* Western subjects are to be given equal importance? One answer we discussed earlier. There is another set of answers which is likely to appeal more to people of today.

III

History and sociology will confirm that the modern scientific revolution is a European phenomenon which brought in its wake the notion that science is not only different from, but also superior to, the humanities. By the end of the 19th century, Europe came to the conclusion, marking the successful end (also viewed as the death of epistemology) of the 300-year-old concept of epistemology, that science and knowledge were the same. Those who took this assertion out of context and believed it to be an unqualified and absolute truth (and many more things besides), came to develop a peculiar attitude to the humanities. For this and for many other reasons, science continued to gain enormous social importance, prestige and glamour. As the distance between science and the humanities increased due to some valid and many not so valid reasons, the humanities came to be neglected more and more. The pseudo-scientific cult of scientism, mistaken as a scientific temperament, came to play a significant role in the popular underestimation of humanities. In spite of the fact that Russell confessed in the first decade of the 20th century that he failed to understand why mathematics and logic (or philosophy) were taught in different university departments, the distance between the two broad areas of human knowledge and experience increased till 1959 when science and the humanities became as different as, to borrow the celebrated words of C. P. Snow, two distinct cultures in which scientists cannot understand the intellectuals (as the scholars of humanities came to be known) and vice versa. The debate between Huxley and Arnold failed to turn the situation in favour of the humanities. Though many academic professionals or lay public do not seem to be seriously bothered about the situation, an increasing number of thinkers have for some time felt the need to restore to the humanities the position of importance it richly deserves. These thinkers are seen to discuss the matter among themselves informally as well as organise workshops and seminars to discuss and debate this issue. It may be in order if we state briefly our arguments for the importance of humanities not only in the syllabi of academic institutions but also in the minds of people, including policy makers and administrators.

This dichotomy, distance or conflict between science and the humanities was imported to India along with Western education, science and culture. Be that as it may, we would like to first offer two arguments as to why science and the humanities be given equal importance (in their respective areas and contexts) and brought closer together. There are not enough good reasons to keep them separate or view one to be comparatively superior or inferior to the other. Secondly, there are good reasons to bring them together and cultivate them with equal importance. By saying that there are no good reasons to keep them emphatically separate implies that the reasons for which they are sharply distinguished are not valid.

One such reason is the belief, which is quite old, that science is based on dependable and effective methods, and as such, the knowledge which science, as based on such a (scientific) method, yields is epistemologically superior to what can be achieved in, say, history. Many diehard scientists cannot overcome this belief in practice even when they are told that the old conception of science no longer holds in a period which is marked by the emergence of many new sciences like sociology, anthropology, economics, psychology and, in particular, consciousness studies. Many practicing scientists are reluctant to recognise as science proper these branches of knowledge which are called soft sciences. We need to revise the old conception or the received view of science, and this is not easily achieved. There is hardly any such thing as *the* scientific method which all working scientists use in practice. Further, science is not dependable because it gives us absolute and necessary truth. Science (natural) gives us general statistical probability. This cannot be a reason to justify drawing a sharp distinction between science and the humanities. Whatever those addicted to science or scientism may say, practicing scientists of worth acknowledge that there is hardly any fixed method which scientists (or they alone) follow in practice. Secondly, the argument from exact knowledge also is not fully convincing. For, just as there are hard and soft sciences, so also there are inexact and exact humanities. Paninian linguistics or grammar, let alone logic, is by any standard exact and it is admitted to be so by all. The argument of the usefulness of science and Rammohan's caricature of Sanskrit grammar are not strong enough considerations for the present purpose.

Paninian grammar is both useful and rigorous. Again, history can be exact in its own way besides being useful. Long before the science–humanities debate was born, Thucydides claimed exactitude for his history or at least the type of history he was writing. If we compare his work with that of Herodotus, the claim is quite justified even in the view of seasoned historians. Nearer our time it has been pointed out by scholars that a subject can be scientific without being a science. Lastly, whatever be their personal opinion and conviction, scientists today can hardly deny in public that sociology is a science even though it cannot match mathematics or even physics in exactitude. The newly established department of exact humanities in IIIT, Hyderabad, is both conceptually and historically a correct and timely venture. It is quite in order therefore that earnest attempts are being made in recent times to start strong humanities departments or centres in some IITs (like IIT, BHU) and universities. If it is still claimed that the rigour and exactitude of science cannot be found in the humanities, it can be conceded without any gain to the votaries of scientism. For, science ensures this rigour where it has it by sacrificing the qualitative richness of our world and experience and concentrating exclusively on the quantifiable aspects or features of phenomena. The rigour of language and reasoning in science is balanced by loss of richness, whereas the relative lack of rigour in the humanities is compensated by its richness. Basically, we can realistically demand only such rigour which is appropriate to the context. We can go even further and cite the example of *Navyanyaya* which illustrates the rare achievement of extreme analytical rigour with full qualitative richness. It is a pity that great men in India think they can pass judgement on such a rich system without ever developing the taste or competence for it. Lastly, there are as many branches of the humanities as there are of science. Selectively citing examples (of soft humanities and hard sciences), it may be easy to show that a piece of romantic lyric does not compare with an equation of particle physics. The humanities also include that genre of literature which is called essay. In such writing, many highly analytic and rigorous works can be found. On the other hand, there are many soft sciences as well.

This is in brief why we believe that there are no good reasons to keep science and humanities separate as relatively superior and inferior. There are two reasons why they should be brought closer and combined. First, both humans and their cultures have their respective identities. Each one of them is an integrated whole comprising many parts and facets; each of them is a complex unity. Any normal and adult human individual (who is not moulded by the current education system in such a way that he/she is hardly distinguishable from innumerable others of the same kind) has, and is most likely to have, diverse interests and aspirations, talents and tastes, and missions and duties. Where is the justice if they cannot be given the opportunity to develop and fulfil all these facets, thereby enriching themselves maximally and realising life's full potential. My expertise in science or the humanities, as the case may be, is not enough reason why I must not have the taste for or expertise in the humanities or science. In the field of knowledge and learning too they must be allowed to explore their capabilities which may cover many diverse fields. This does not mean that they will become experts in any field, but there may be individuals to whom variety suits better than specialisation in one chosen discipline or area of knowledge, along with generally sound knowledge of many other fields and subjects. Any living and fully developed culture expectedly has within its unity room for diverse sciences and technologies, humanities, art, architecture, music, among others. It should combine at least 18 *vidyas* and 64 *kalas*. If it does not, then it is not a developed or mature culture. The second reason which is more important and technical is that if different disciplines are brought closer then each is likely to contribute to others in whatever measure appropriate and possible. Beyond a point, fragmentation within knowledge or within science does not help but rather hinders growth. Too much specialisation tends to confine a particular discipline of knowledge or a certain branch of it to a very small group of specialists who alone can understand one another's work and converse among them. In such a situation there develops existential concern and a compulsion to support each other under peer pressure or public apathy or criticism. Honest appreciation and criticism are replaced by blind support, rationality by group loyalty. Such appreciation and criticism are most likely to come from informed amateurs who are established experts in their respective fields and at the same time take living interest in the discipline in question without being experts of it. So what best ensures real growth of a specialised branch of knowledge is the presence around it of a community of informed amateurs. Epistemological holism (being practiced and advocated in recent times by great scholars who have expertise in some branches of science as well as branches of humanities) seems to be the most mature and valid conception of human knowledge. According to it, human knowledge is a single evolving body or system of knowledge of which different disciplines of science and humanities form different moments or stages. Instead of being completely different from each other, science and humanities are different stages which shade into the other gradually. It therefore follows that the suggestions of the leaders of NEM that the right type of education should combine science and humanities, and that a sound system of education should keep a provision for teaching both was quite perceptive and valid according to today's findings.

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We have spoken of recent findings. Let us present another set of findings which confirms eloquently the perceptiveness of the leaders of NEM whom independent India in a sense ignored. They understood that for the full and healthy growth of an individual or a country, education in both the humanities on the one hand and science and technology on the other was necessary. They realised this in the beginning of the 20th century. We find full endorsement of it in study, research and survey conducted at the end of the century. We will cite one example of such a study and the results it yielded.

The study in question was done by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on some aspects of the relationship between economic development and scientific progress in the OECD member countries. It was already accepted that economic growth was not the only or the best indicator of social development which rather depends on an individual's overall well being and welfare. The Human Development Index (HDI) includes as one essential factor, 'educational attainment comprising adult literacy'. In this connection we note that the OECD study introduced the concept of civic scientific literacy (CSL). We do not intend to go into any detailed discussion of this 'socially pertinent and significant factor, that is, the new index called CSL, which appears so far to have passed somewhat unnoticed and unattended to in this sub-continent.' How is CSL linked to HDI? Adult literacy has central importance in HDI.

> If literacy is...judged by stricter criteria and higher demands it should have some reflection of CSL with the development of twin components of civility

> and scientific rationality. The development of real scientifically oriented bends [*sic*] of mind and of degree of rationality could only lead to and would ensure rational choices of behavior in every aspect of life. One must also remember, in this context, that enlarging or widening the scope of such choices and behavior has nowadays become the benchmark for and focal theme of development.... The European Union emphasizes .... Society is driven by citizens who are aware of their own responsibilities and are imbued with a spirit of solidarity towards those with whom they form local/national European communities. Besides, in civil society the cultural relevance and the social function of science, the development of scientific temper and the spirit of tolerance of others' views are to be inculcated and highly stressed. .... The scientists, the scientific-technocratic personnel and the scientific community at large in the civil societies should have the preliminary ideas of the tenets and norms of socially responsive and socially responsible behavior *which could be attained only be acquiring some basic knowledge in the foundations of Humanities and Societies (FHS)* so that he/she as administrator or political scientist, or executive-in-action, should or does not ever feel too shaky to arrive at any definite conclusive judgment on the ethical aspect of any controversial scientific and/or technological issue. The system of introduction and imparting a kind of *integrated education (in science and all streams)* and culture might be viewed as the 'civic-scientific' literacy. It has the seeds and embryos of both the humanist societies with emphasis on social welfare of mankind and the rationalist societies driven mainly by the scientific credos.

Now we will turn to the second component of the idea of national education as inclusive and balanced education. Our discerning predecessors, the leaders of NEM, allowed this component to inform the syllabi they prepared and introduced in the national schools under the NCE of the time. In the courses of study offered by colleges and universities of India today, we miss this component and believe that revisiting NEM is useful. The component in question is the requirement that education in India should combine both European and Indian subjects with equal emphasis. The study of Indian subjects should not be ignored. Only by giving due importance to the study of these subjects can we bring traditional knowledge into today's mainstream education and research.. However, the history of education in independent India is witness to the marginalisation of everything traditional in education— the subjects taught, the method of teaching, the custodians of this knowledge, and even the institutions of oriental learning (perhaps with the thought that they are different and outmoded branches of the humanities). In fairness, however, it should be said that in this area the failure of the educational administrators seems to be greater. The responsibility of teachers is also quite considerable. Whatever traditional learning still exists is due to the perception, personality and efforts of only a few celebrated scholars, teachers, thinkers, leaders or activists. By Indian subjects we mean Sanskrit language and literature, literature comprising philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, jurisprudence, poetry, music, astronomy, mathematics, among others. India today is witness to the marginalisation rather than the incorporation, with due importance and emphasis, of these subjects into the mainstream of higher education.

The history of marginalisation is long and its methods have been varied. This is a vast subject. To begin with, the Indologists, though it may sound strange, did much to marginalise Indian knowledge in their own way. They did it perhaps unknowingly and certainly unintentionally. It appears that they were not adequately perceptive or discerning in this regard. However, we will not discuss it here. But the way Indian subjects were marginalised in colonial India by different groups (other than Indologists) as well as stray individuals is unbelievable though true. There was the group of radical anglicists, the young India group of Westernised Indians on the one hand, and on the other were individuals including scientists, intellectuals, administrators and activists. Simultaneously, Sanskrit language and literature were held in high esteem by some people in every age. But stray incidents of a pro-India stand did not result in the recovery of India's intellectual heritage and did not ensure the development of India's theoretical intellectual culture. Today, the majority of people who assume a pro-India stand have the mindset of liberal Hindus who over-emphasise religious and spiritual subjects in Sanskrit and believe that India is predominantly a spiritual culture. Such a mentality (like scientism) does not do justice to India's intellectual heritage or present India in a true light. The truth is that India is not just a spiritual culture, but a fully developed one with considerable achievements in all areas of human experience and knowledge. In recent times, a good number of science and technology experts and professionals are taking interest in literature and subjects in Sanskrit language. The Education Commissions of independent India—1964–66 Kothari Commission of the Central Government and 1981–84 Bhabatosh Datta Commission of the state of West Bengal, to cite just two examples—have recorded the importance of the teaching and study of Sanskrit language and literature in no uncertain terms. It has been pointed out on the one hand that emphasis on these has nothing to do with revivalism or nationalist chauvinism, and on the other, it has been made explicit that Sanskrit is so integral to Indian culture and life as a whole and, functioning as it does as a cementing factor, that it is impossible to think of India without Sanskrit. It should also be said that with the exception of the state of West Bengal, state governments have generally been more favourably disposed to Sanskrit for a long time. The central government's Rastriya Samskrit Samasthan which was later raised to the status of a university is an eloquent and positive gesture.

Alongside, there are instances of neglect in practice. It was proudly announced that in a certain Education Commission of Independent India there were more than 10 foreigners but in none of the Commissions, so far as we know, was there a single traditional scholar or pundit even though among them there were great scholars who also knew English and some Western subjects. In a publication of selected papers presented at the sessions of the annual Indian Philosophical Congress, not a single paper by a pundit was included for the first 25 years. Nobody thinks of inviting pundits to speak at these sessions. During the first phase of the education movement in colonial India, some great Indian personalities not only strongly recommended discontinuation of Indian subjects, but even spoke disparagingly about them. Sanskrit was taught in Western style educational institutions like school, college and university, and still is, but it remains outside mainstream education. *Tols* and *catuspathis* have almost vanished. Great centres of traditional learning have been closed. The last great effort for the development of Sanskrit subjects and language was perhaps made by Madan Mohan Malaviya by establishing within BHU a full-fledged faculty bearing the name Samskrita Vidya and Dharma Vijnana Samkayah. It still exists but it cannot be said to be in the best of health.

To conclude this discussion, it is a failure of independent India that its second inheritance, the unfinished movement of national education, could not mature and come to a successful end. Why, in spite of many efforts, is there no real interest in spreading Sanskrit? It is not easy to explain or understand. The marginalisation of Indian subjects and traditional knowledge shows that we still do not have what can be called national education, nor have we been able to fulfil the dream of our predecessors that Indian education would provide students with a comprehensive and balanced education which would be true to India's tradition and suited to her genius.

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Before we go on to some other deficiencies in the current educational system in India, we need to say a few more words by way of explaining further the idea of national education which the leaders of NEM had. However, I could not locate definite and explicit statements in the writings of the leaders of the movement. India needs comprehensive education as described earlier to ensure that we have authentic knowledge and understanding of our national life and culture. Without this we remain a race without a soul; slaves of an alien culture despite living in it for many years. Around 1930, Professor K. C. Bhattacharya observed that, after not less than 60 years of Western education, Indians achieved three things: loss of *svaraj* in ideas—our creativity and power of independent thinking; the habit of accepting in a docile fashion what the foreigners taught us; and a new class of English educated Indians who were completely alienated from the masses. If we carefully read the writings of the leaders of the national education movement like Aurobindo and Satish Chandra in particular, it will not be very difficult to understand what they meant by education along national lines. That is, an education, the form and content of which would manifest national aspirations which characterise the culture in question. It should enable us to develop an awareness of our own country's culture and self-image and remain committed to it. Simultaneously, it will give us courage to interrogate this self-image, leading to a critical appreciation of the culture which in turn will facilitate progress.

National education produces patriotism of this nature. Today we speak of nation building and national progress, meaning, thereby, hardly anything more than political and military strength on the one hand and economic prosperity on the other. This we do first without thought to take India as a total culture and without caring to be clear about whether or how far our own knowledge of India conforms to her authentic self-knowledge. We are aware of the danger of saying this. Many sociologists and others, dominated as they are by some modern stereotypes and clichés, would like to place us in the group of people whose notion of education is that of the transmission of the dominant ideology. However, we are helpless. If education is viewed primarily as education for nation building, then the success and failure can be judged with reference to what conception of nation is involved, what type of nation creates the context. A platonic conception of education reflects the idea of a nation which is exemplified by Sparta. It is well known that today two images are simultaneously projected to be the self-image of India by two sections of her people. On the one hand a large section of people, including a sizeable portion of the intelligentsia, think, knowingly or unknowingly, that submitting themselves to Western tutelage is better for India as it is essentially a mystical or spiritual culture. They try to make us believe that this is the authentic self-image of India. If we investigate carefully we can easily see that the idea of India as a mystical or spiritual culture is an orientalist construction. The liberal Hindus, who were born as late as the 19th century, internalised this view and started preaching it proudly as the only legitimate view about India. They seem to have assumed the role of the custodians of traditional Indian culture. Another group of people do not publicly deny liberal Hinduism, but rather support it, though more as a politically correct stance than as a manifestation of their conviction. They, at the same time, openly hold the belief, which they also tend to implant in all, that India is an emerging global economic superpower. Ordinary people are confused about which is India, and which India we want to build or develop. How is education to be shaped, which education would be best suited for the progress of which India? We will not go into this vast and sensitive subject here. But one thing to note is that each of these two groups of Indians takes India to be a partial culture. The advocates of spirituality even attribute similar views to our ancestors: that India is seen to be a partial culture, merely a religious one. To the ancestors of medieval India too they attributed the same view, but this time depicted the religion as a decadent legal religion which was little more than an elaborate system of senseless rituals. Those who follow the unexamined view that India is a partial rather than total culture cannot fully appreciate the need for a balanced and comprehensive education as already explained. We have reason to believe that the leaders of NEM did believe that India was a total culture as every developed culture normally is. Given this fact, we can say that national education is the education as conceived by traditional India before the advent of the colonising British and which continued to be shared by many Indians thereafter. We have not patiently and objectively tried to understand what conception of education India had before the advent of the West.

It has been said that only two of the traditional cultures of the world have succeeded in maintaining their existence and identity over centuries and India is one of them. The total and developed culture of India of the past had an efficient technology base of iron and steel, brass and copper, clay, stone, other metals, wood sculpture and wood craft, ship building, food preservation, water preservation and irrigation, cotton industry, etc. It also has soft technology in the form of science, literature, art (including music, painting, sculpture, architecture, aesthetics, statecraft, art of military and civil governance, etc.) A certain system of education covered the sciences, arts, technologies and humanities mentioned here. It had a systematic inventory of subjects of study and practice, including well demarcated disciplines of knowledge. It had *para vidya* and *apara vidya*, a fact widely known. But it is not so well known that there is another broad way of dividing disciplines of knowledge which corresponds to the former division. It is the division of knowledge into *jnana* and *vijnana*. The word *vijnana* covers *silpa* and *sastra* and hence all the disciplines of theoretical and practical knowledge which exhaust useful knowledge.

The second feature of the traditional conception of education is that literacy was not an essential part of education. In a long, well established and powerful oral tradition it was more or less natural. Besides, there was no printing press for dissemination of knowledge through writing till the 19th century. However, there were mobile learners who would gladly cover long distances to receive oral education or study manuscripts which were normally non-transferrable. In spite of this condition and repeated wanton destruction of manuscripts, the number of extant manuscripts which have so far been discovered, preserved and recorded, is astonishingly large. In recent times, efforts by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts for procuring and systematically preserving them is laudable. University libraries, unfortunately, are in disrepair. The Indian government has rightly constituted a Manuscript Mission. To be fair, many early indologists worked in the field of manuscript preservation and documentation, but despite that, just as the absence of written records and texts made it difficult for foreigners to assess the extent of education prevalent in India in pre-colonial days, their confusing education with literacy created the myth that women and the working classes were denied education.

There were two other features which were important. Traditionally, education was viewed less academically or formally; instead of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, the dominant belief was knowledge for the user. So the custodians of knowledge were not non-working college and university professors, but the seniors among the practitioners of different branches of knowledge. It was not felt to be necessary to write in book form the branches of knowledge that were regularly put to practice. Many manuals of methods of calculation cannot be found, but the actual users of such methods such as masons and carpenters knew them and regularly used them. The word 'use' must be understood in this context. It was not felt necessary to write down the Vedas as they were regularly recited. But there are also manuscripts where knowledge was more abstract and not for regular use. A greater number of written works on astronomy and philosophy can be expected than on music or sculpture or architecture. Knowledge could not be located in the classrooms or departments or libraries of institutions of formal education. But people knew what knowledge was available with whom, and aspiring learners would find them. In those days, the scholars were the institutions. Today, we know the scholars by their institutional affiliations. In the traditional system of education, knowledge was transmitted down the family line or down the preceptor disciple line. This latter line was very much like the family line; it used to be referred to as *gurukula* (academic family or *vidya vamsa*) as distinct from but strongly resembling *pitrkula* (biological family or *pitrvamsa*). The family model was so strong and well established that students were residential and were, for all practical purposes, part of the teacher's family. This was as much a practice in the case of vocal or instrumental music as it was in the case of philosophy or scripture, linguistics or architecture. Education was free and teachers had no fixed and regular income. They did get charity but barely enough to maintain their family of which the students were also a part. However, they were highly respected in society. The *gurukula* system had some disadvantages also. Many otherwise knowledgeable persons had technological skills but were very poor in theory. Good or bad, this was the form and nature of education in India from long antiquity. Even later day *pathsalas* and *catuhspathis* were person centric. They used to be named after the scholar and guru, like Paksadhar Misra's *tol*.

It is to be noted, however, that in spite of the strong belief in knowledge with the actual users, as against knowledge for the sake of knowledge, which shaped educational practice as well, theory was not completely absent. Every single practice continuing down the line for a sufficient length of time could be traced back to some textual source, written or oral, often in the form of a book of aphorism. To any such source there would be associated a long line of commentaries of different genres—some would be primarily explanatory, some more critical. Even so, the bulk of knowledge in these fields used to be orally transmitted to students by teachers. Teaching was a sort of profession by choice and often as a duty or even pious duty; as a moral obligation to repay the debt to one's teacher by teaching one's own students. There was little importance given to formal examination or degrees. There was social recognition and respect for education and the educated, and for both teachers and students. The teacher concerned was held responsible for the success or failure of students and this was viewed as quite natural by all concerned.

So national education is not an empty word; it has clear sense and content. A nation which has a long history of a distinct type of educational theory and practice has every right to resist any attempt by others to uproot it. At the same time it deserves to be trusted to have the requisite desire and ability to transform and improve, at every opportune time, its current education according to its own vision and need. This was the meaning and message of the national education movement. Today we should feel obliged to revisit it rather than forget or ignore it.

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We end by noting a few serious deficiencies in the current system of university education in India which are of more recent origin. Most of these are products of post-independence India. It has already been observed that between the second half and the last decade of the 20th century, India witnessed progressive marginalisation of humanities on the one hand and an increasing emphasis on science and technology on the other. To be more precise, there was a conscious effort in independent India to promote science and engineering with (according to some) the result that the humanities were marginalised. During the days of NEM, the leaders were worried that the education system at that time was overly literary and needed to be balanced by introducing science and technology. From around 1947, free India went a step beyond; she promoted science and technology and allowed the devaluation of the humanities. Since the 1980s and particularly the 1990s, commerce and business management, and other professional subjects have been increasingly marginalising even science. But there has been no improvement in the position of humanities either in the academic world or in society. Our leaders are still neither in 1905 nor in 2000, but stuck somewhere in between. They are yet to update themselves and recognise the sense and importance of CSL as a necessary component of HDI or respond to the demand, largely confined to the working academic community, for balancing the over emphasis on science by recovering the humanities to the position of importance it deserves.

We need to note another form and aspect of marginalisation of the humanities, or rather, university education in the humanities. Today, the humanities occupy an unenviable position both in university curricula and in our life. The aspect we want to emphasise relates to job prospects of university graduates. In the first place, a university degree in the humanities is not considered enough for even a teaching job in a primary, secondary or higher secondary school, let alone for the post of a teacher of a college or university. Earlier, teaching appointments to these institutions depended on an M.A. degree. Today, an M. A. degree is considered to be the minimum qualification not for appointment as a teacher, but for appearing for NET or SLET examinations. Only those who can successfully clear the latter examination are considered for appointment in colleges and universities. For a teaching job in schools too, an M.A. degree has to be followed by an examination conducted by the School Service Commission. Even for an academic research fellowship, an M.A. degree is not considered enough. Students now give greater importance to preparing for these examinations which do not demand thorough and in depth study and mastery of the subjects or disciplines of knowledge which are included in the humanities stream. After written tests like NET or SLET, the candidates have to face an interview.

In the stream of technology the case is different. In industries, candidates with the required degree from a university or Institutes of Technology are selected and appointed directly. Later, as and when required, the new recruits are sent for suitable (professional) training. This makes perfect sense as interviewing job-seekers gives us a sense of their personality, aptitude for communication, etc. It is useless to argue that there is a difference between the humanities and professional subjects on the one hand and education in the humanities and education in professional subjects on the other. This does not answer why a university degree cannot be considered sufficient for employment in the teaching profession or award of research fellowships. Reform in and an improved university education is needed, but do not allow it to be taken as inadequate for even a teaching post or as necessary only for appearing in further tests such as NET. Alternatively, if a university degree or education is useless in the sense described, then we should take all the necessary steps to ensure that a large number of students do not waste three or more valuable years of their life pursuing university education. Relatively better procedures are followed in IITs and some other professional institutions. Entrance examinations for professional courses and

IITs have been made much more difficult than the examinations for university courses in the humanities. The degrees that successful students of IITs get are considered sufficient for employment in academic institutions or even appropriate for jobs in industry or corporate houses.

Certain recent policies and their implementation have done greater damage to the teaching of many subjects within the humanities. We have in mind in the semester system of teaching and examination. Although there is no space for a detailed discussion, I know several faculty in the humanities who feel that this system has benefited students not so much in learning but in scoring high marks in examinations. The workload of teachers has increased, but the sort of work does not bring any academic benefit to them; rather, they spend more time in holding examinations and checking answer scripts and less in research. Education has become more mechanical and the concerned teachers are being deprived of the joy and challenge of teaching. They have been turned into marking machines and have to check answer scripts throughout the year. What is fundamentally wrong with the system is the lack of awareness of the basic distinction between different modes of teaching. There are subjects in which the best mode of instruction could be lectures. But there are other subjects which demand instruction in the teaching mode alone. Most of the classical Indian subjects in Sanskrit are available in books which constitute essential teaching aids or material. These are written in such a style that teachers need to teach them line by line. If we are to blindly follow the lecture mode of instruction, then either the teaching of these subjects should be dropped or a semester reduced to a few lines and sentences of the book. In a predominantly oral tradition, texts are rarely self-explanatory. Students cannot understand these texts, let alone do them justice, with the help of a few lectures by teachers on or about the theme discussed in those texts. The policy makers seem to be totally innocent of the truth that the mode of instruction is determined by the nature of the subject in question. Mechanical uniformity should not be imposed. We need to immediately restore the relevant instruction mode in the subjects. Otherwise, subjects that have survived being marginalised will gradually disappear from the university curricula. There should be at least open debate on these issues. If others do not, current faculty should endeavour to force all the concerned parties to meet and debate these issues without further delay.

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